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Attitudes required of the American in his commercial, verbal, and urban society have not been characteristically held by the American Negro because the experiences necessary for developing these attitudes have been denied to him.

None of the existing programs established by Negro integrationists accomplish their goals in acceptable time. The American Negro community should mature enough to choose its destiny, to set its goals, and to devise strategies to achieve them. It could use political pressure, the law, and special training programs.

More specifically, Negro community leadership training classes for adults and community career committees should be initiated. New kinds of public schools should be demanded by the Negro community, presumably through Federal aid to education. Negro history should be taught in all schools. The qualification requirements for the armed forces should be liberalized for Negroes, and relief payments should meet their cultural needs.

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Carliner, Lewis

NEGRO EDUCATION

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A STRATEGY FOR NEGRO EDUCATION

Problem and Tentative Response

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Materials and Research Branch
Equal Educational Opportunities Program
Office of Education

Bennett O. Stalvey

A STRATEGY FOR NEGRO EDUCATION

Problem and Tentative Response

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The statistics on the Negro situation in the United States have become a numerical platitude:

a) a tenth of the populations with a 50 percent higher birthrate (than whites) and a roughly equivalent death rate, only lately acquired, but not increasing proportionately in the population because of offsetting white immigration, a factor which could change with the movement into the U.S. from the Caribbean areas.

b) sixty percent urban, about 40 percent rural, mostly in the South, and these people on the way North.

c) thirteen percent unemployed about twice the rate for whites, with the younger Negroes victims of unemployment rates almost twice as high as for the Negro population, and even this statistic is deceptive because in urban centers unemployment among Negro young people is often as high as 50 or 60 percent.

d) concentrated at the bottom of the society, among unskilled workers, proportionately four times as many as among whites, in the service trades, two and half times as many proportionately as among whites, three times more likely to be farm laborers, with Negro women providing most of the domestic workers in the country, six times as many proportionately as among whites, underrepresented among professional management and skilled occupations to the same degree that they are over-represented statistically in the worst jobs, among the unemployed, and in the poorest paying trades, except in one important area, government, where the black tenth of the American population has an eighth of the jobs, and an even higher proportion of some government jobs, where Negroes have consciously or unconsciously made a strategic breakthrough, in the Post Office, most importantly, but also in welfare departments, and in some city governments.

e) earnings for men average about two thirds those of whites, $5662 to $3789, and for women about 70 percent those of whites, $3410 to $2372.

f) deprived educationally with males over 25 years of age having completed about 8 years of schooling on the average, compared with 12 for whites; 12 years compared to 8.4 for women; among 25 to 29 year olds, the figures are 12.5 years for white males compared with 10.9 years for Negroes; and among women 12.4 for white females, compared with 11 years of school for Negro women. However, this appearance of progress is an exaggeration of the reality because a year of schooling in most Negro schools is not the equivalent of a year of schooling in most white schools.

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No matter how the situation of the Negro in the United States is measured, he comes out at the bottom of the society, and he has been at the lower end of the society for more than three hundred years, in housing, in social opportunities, in collisions with established authorities, in access to power, in incidents of victimization by bullying, abuse, mistreatment, lynching, and imprisonment, and in the chance to exercise control over his career.

Over the three hundred years of oppression there have been sporadic but consistent protests by Negroes, but within the last decade there has been a continuous, if uneven, organized effort by Negroes to achieve some kind of liberation.

This new period of accelerated, continuous agitation in Negro life, which began roughly with the Supreme Court decision on education, is an aspect of a world-wide colored uprising with marked and significant differences which have been ignored by those who have equated the American Negro movement for equality with the freedom struggles in Africa.

As the result of a polar confusion (everything black is the same/ nothing is black and different, all things are gray and alike), in the United States the situation of the Negro has been mistakenly called only the latest of a series of migrations to American cities by largely rural workers, who, until the Negro arrived in the U.S. urban centers, lived in slums for a while, and then moved up and out as they were assimilated into the national community.

With respect to the first misconception, the American Negro protest movement, if all its aspirations were realized at best could result only in the assimilation and integration of the Negro into a white society. Because of the minority status of Negroes there is no possibility of significant political changes, of the emergence of the Negro into a dominant group (as in Africa), or except by the improbable minority conquest of power, ever approach the privileged places and perquisites of American white Protestants, or, for that matter of American Jews. Presumably in a revolution there is the possibility of a political victory which marks the successful end of the struggle and which is confirmed by the assumption of power. But if all the goals of the civil rights movement were won, even in the terms of the unrealistic hopes some slogans encourage, the most to be gained would be the chance to infiltrate the society, and to share in its fruits and frustrations proportionately, that is, roughly to be ten percent of the poorest, ten percent of the richest, ten percent of the establishment, and ten of the broad middle. Only a most unlikely revolution could bring about this integration in the foreseeable future, and even that revolution would not be a Negro revolution, but one which would necessarily depend upon an alliance with a number of other groups in the society.

The erroneous view that Negroes are only the last in a succession of migrations to American cities is sometimes offered as justification for the liberal complacency, namely that if white people could be educated out of their irrational prejudices and the discriminatory bars against blacks were let down, Negroes would automatically be escalated up in status and assimilated as was the case for the Irish, many Slavs, the Germans, the Scandinavians, and as is now the situation for the Italians. If Jews have not been assimilated, at least they have escalated. Some immigrant groups, however, especially some of the Slavic groups, have undergone very little escalation, and at best have only been assimilated into the white working class.

Actually, in spite of the American opportunity myth, each of these groups was pushed up by a succeeding influx of new arrivals, whose comparative unfamiliarity with the language, and lack of American seniority tended to create a ladder rung in the cities lower than the penultimate arrivals, who by this fact alone went from last to next to last.

It has been explained that Negroes have not undergone the traditional elevating assimilation which is supposed to characterise American life, because of their highly visible pigmentation which presumably made it possible to harden the prejudices which were raised against every group of new immigrants into a permanent discriminatory barrier.

Pigmentation, however, is not the entire answer, since later arriving West Indian Negroes and Puerto Ricans have leapfrogged southern American Negroes in American cities, and despite their pigmentation have opened up stores to meet their needs and those of Negroes in their neighborhoods, are already producing their own professional men, and still this side of absorption in the white society are making progress which in some ways is comparable to that of the Jews in this country. Caribbean colored people, in spite of their unfamiliarity with English in some cases, and their lack of experience in American ways in every case, already have outstripped the American Negro on the scene in operating real estate agencies, restaurants, grocery stores, newsstands, small factories, and all the other proliferant enterprises which characterise city life.

It is not that Negroes (or colored people) are different, but American Negroes are different. These differences incapacitate Southern Negroes for competition in U.S. city life, and have on the whole made it impossible for them to undergo any of the nearly automatic acculturation which has led to the accommodation of other groups to the American community.

Three hundred years of slavery, serfdom, and subjection deprived the American Negro of the experiences which lead to the attitudes required in a commercial, verbal, urban society. The Negro slum family, an adaptation from the African culture to the exigencies of Southern rural life in its looseness, in its emphasis on the primary role of the Negro mother, or aunt, in its permissiveness, and in its fluid extension, is different from the white European family, which has evolved however successfully over many generations in an adjustment to the industrial society.

Where Negroes have come from the rural South and found relatively secure industrial or urban jobs with more or less adequate wages, traditional cultural patterns have been transformed, and black, rural bumpkins have very quickly become white strivers with black or brown skins. For example, in many neighborhoods in Detroit where Negro factory workers with some accumulated seniority live, the fathers and mothers and children, the houses, the furniture, the lawns, the clothing, the behavior, the values, including the attitude toward school, are more white in everything except skin color, than that of the environing whites.

Examined, the experience of the privileged Negroes who have had the good fortune to find a cover in the Post Office or the industrial union contract does suggest that over a period of long continued full employment, it is likely that Negroes conceivably could find a physically, if not emotionally, tolerable place in American life as a respectable, sober, hardworking, component of the American working class, not unlike that enjoyed by the South Slavs in many midwest industrial cities, provided they can have access to decent neighborhoods and schools.

Except during war, however, the U.S. has had full employment only for the briefest of periods, and even if there were full employment over longer periods than the country has ever experienced, developments in the last few years suggest that Negroes are unwilling to become confortably housed, wellfed black American workers even on a soft bottomed society, automobiles, television sets, the highest workers' pay in the world all taken into account.

This is the setting for any discussion of Negro education.

1. Guinzburg in the Negro potential computes the difference between Negro and white averages in all the same statistical series and declares if Negroes were distributed like whites, the U.S. would gain umpteen billion dollars of resources that are now wasted and he urges that a number of reasonable procedures be adopted which would gradually make it possible for Negroes if they chose to be like whites and gradually to disappear in the American society - more effort by Negro leaders to impress Negroes with the values of education, no job discrimination, Federal aid to education, more college scholarships, better vocational training, and so on.

2. Conant makes similar recommendations, but in addition would alter the city slum schools to be more nearly centers for vocational training and education with an acceptance of the unlikelihood of any dramatic changes in the Negro situation in the establishment of youth training centers which would quite deliberately train young Negroes for secure if low grade jobs in the society.

3. The Humphrey-Kennedy proposals are of the same genre elaborated with youth camps aimed at getting young Negro boys off the streets into a setting where they would be disciplined and conditioned as a preparation for slotting into the American society. Job training programs incorporate financial incentives designed to encourage employers and cities to give Negro youths training which would lead to employment. (Also, some cases into superior technical vocations).
in /

4. CORE and the Negro protest groups demand an equalization of access to public education facilities, by bussing, by gerrymandering, in some cases by adding points to the scores of Negro candidates to special schools and training programs, by a variety of special privileges which are esentially a demand for a less than adequate indemnification for three hundred years of deprivation (here the acknowledgment by three Presidents of the United States that Negroes have been penalized unfairly, illegally, and immorally, furnishes a rationale for the indemnification of the Negro community in the manner the Germans indemnified the Jews in recognition of a communal responsibility for the expropriation, the persecution, and the extermination of Jews by the Nazis within a complacent community,(very like the 300 year old complacence of the American society to the Negro situation . None, however, has presented this demand formally and in detail on behalf of the American Negro. For example, using the Guinzburg calculation which has been accepted by the Administration, the average Negro family in the United States is victimized of about three thousand dollars a year by the operation of discrimination in the country. It would thus be relatively simple on the basis of this calculation to compute a cash sum which would be a reasonable repayment of the loss each Negro has suffered.)

These programs for the education of Negroes have their energizing principle not so much in an interest in education, but in a desire on the part of the white community to defuse what is called the social dynamite in the Negro situation, and in the Negro community, as part of a natural but unrationalized expression of discontent.

Among Negroes, the nationalist movement, the work of James Baldwin, and the current divisions in CORE suggest that just as Africans are seeking to fulfill what is beginning to be called the African personality, American Negroes actually are searching for something more than a chance to work as bricklayers and plumbers, that there is a tentative commitment to a cultural struggle that would

enable American Negroes to establish their differences in a multiform society, not assimilated, not segregated, but separately with every right to come and go whenever and wherever people please into every community facility and personal relationship without question or pass cards.

But not one of the programs offered, whether by the white liberals, the black nationalists, the Negro integrationists or trascendentalists, will accomplish their goals in any acceptable time.

The immediate dilemma of the Negro community is that it is too large a minority to lose itself on the American scene, and too small a minority to enforce its demands on the American society. Bayard Ruston, for example, has said that the particular requirement the American Negro must meet is to balance protest between its optimum effectiveness and the limits of the tolerance of the white community. If the protest is not sharp and persistent enough the white community will put off reform, but if it exacerbates white sensibilities the Negro may very well end up in a polite apartheid, enforced by injunctions, conventions, manners, quotas, and the police, but somewhat sweetened by patronage.

What is possible is suggested by the not altogether relevant strategy Jews adopted in England and the United States immediately before and after the First World War. In England, it is reported that the Jewish community quite deliberately, from 1900 to 1910, decided to send his young people to medical and law schools, but especially medical schools, at whatever family cost, and in some cases at the cost of the community, with the result that medicine in England became as Jewish as the Post Office became Negro in the United States. In the U.S., Jews, economically advantaged by a culture which gave them superb resources in the commercial society, sent their young people into the professions open to them, into the schools, into the higher white collar professions, and into business with obvious economic success.

Without the resources of the Jews, and disadvantaged by their higher visibility and their greater numbers, Negroes nevertheless could, if they had the means for making a collective decision, choose the entrances to the economy that are most vulnerable to them and make an exacting effort to train their young people to run for breakthroughs, not into the factories, warehouses, or the skilled and semi-skilled trades where they would end up as black proletariat burdened with all the disabilities of a working class in any country, but rather into status positions which would help the entire Negro community get out of the slums forever.

The great continuing injury put on the American Negro community by slavery, serfdom and servility however, was the blighting of their community organizations. Only within the last few years have Negroes had organizations capable of developing leaders, and which could formulate the work for the goals of the entire black society. When this community organization has matured, the Negro community will be able to choose its destiny, to set its goals, and to devise strategies to achieve them and not be compelled, as is the situation today, to accept decisions and directions given to it.

But if decisions like these were being made now, the present manpower distribution in the U.S. suggests that Negroes should not aim for factory jobs which are temporary expedients in any event, should ignore the apprenticeable trades, and aim for the civil service, for the diplomatic corps, for the service academies, in fact, for all the higher status government classifications where they can use political pressure, the letter of the law, and special training programs to gain entry, and to establish themselves. They should make every effort even at some immediate cost, to skirt the service and servant trades and the muscular employments, for to be black is difficult enough in a white society, to bend to it by choosing a servile occupation is self-mutilating. As in the case of the Post Office experience, the gains made in any government agency will provide an economic, social, and political base, for the development of group leaders to keep the existing part of the movement in motion, and to provide support for a continuing campaign.

What recommends this strategy or its equivalent to anyone concerned about an autonomous development of the Negro community in this country is that, apart from whatever is said in propaganda, agitation, and demonstrations, Negroes must understand that if the schools were integrated today everywhere throughout the country, the most that could be accomplished would be that the Negroes who are now penalized because of their pigmentation, would continue in more or less the same social situation because they are poor, and because they would continue to be poor and black it would be impossible (properly) for them ever to believe that there was no black intent in their deprivation.

Bussing and gerrymandering, which are admittedly necessary and useful as political tactics, and should not be abandoned as demands, because without them the equality effort will tire, will nevertheless not change the determining situation of Negroes, that is,

> that they live in letterless homes which are a powerful handicap to people in white schools
>
> that their children have no place to study in their present urban and domestic congestion
>
> that until Negroes learn their own history and make a group cultural choice they will always be easy victims of a trap which will instill a secret uncertainty about their worth and lead them to aspire to be black whites

that the character of a person's education is determined by income status, and until income equality is achieved they must demand compensating education allowances (family allowances, student stipends through college)

that in the existing communities the pressures against attending school are so great -even the pressure from the government to train for trades- that ways must be found to institutionalize study centers for children of all ages, which involve parents, on every block

that the most effective way to establish a learning aspiration in children is by the example of the parents

What is apparent from an examination of the Negro in America today is that the Negro's education problem is different from that of every other group in the community. If this difference is not to cripple Negroes permanently, their significance and meaning must be determined and acted upon by Negroes. Until now it has been the misfortune of Negroes and the defect of most programs for educating Negroes that the planning has been a projection from the perspectives (and often the needs) of middle class Protestant educators, urban Catholic politicians, and Jewish radicals.

Tentatively, simply for the purpose of continuing the protest movement, for assuring leadership as the Negro community begins to assume a role in the American society in keeping with its importance (to whites as well to themselves) for the purpose of beginning to maneuver against the many, and often well-meaning, efforts to cherish the Negro as a convenience to the white society, there do appear to be certain educational commitments which should be made, especially because in some measure they are immediately possible. Some utopian demands are not likely of achievement, but their presentation tends to exert pressures which make lesser realizations likely, and failing this, tend to furnish the starting point for the education of the people in the protest movement (which in itself is the precondition for improvement in either the education or the situation of Negroes):

1) within the Negro community leadership training classes for adults in every block, aimed at adults of all ages, to include public speaking, reading, Negro history, legal rights of Negroes. As in the case of the labor movement these classes primarily organized by Negro protest groups could be established within university extension programs, or the public schools.

2) Negro community career committees, whatever they are called, they should keep abreast of jobs in civil service (federal state, city) and search out and coach candidates, if necessary, to qualify and get these jobs. Coaching classes themselves should be continuing, widely advertised and should be a part of the leadership training classes.

3) Negro community should demand new kinds of public schools in their areas, schools that are open until late at night, that incorporate adequate libraries, that have people assigned for supervising studies in the evening and in the night, which are centers of adult learning, as well as child education.

4) Negroes should ask for, within the public school program, special training programs to qualify thousands more young Negro women as public school assistants, who could supervise study classes, be library assistants, and overcome the impersonal crowd atmosphere which characterises slum schools.

5) presuming Federal aid for education, more schools, more teachers, and integration, the integration should be total, that is track systems, selection systems, all the devices which eliminate Negroes (or for that matter any child) from any school he (or his parents) wants to go to.

6) Negro history should be taught in all schools, social science and history text books should be reviewed to insure adequate and accurate treatment of Negro history (Negro heroes, national figures and so on should be incorporated into the standard curriculum)

7) Negroes should begin to work to establish the context for the authentic autonomous choice of a role for Negroes in the American life, study teams to Africa, other black communities, American invitations to black scholars and artists from other countries, organization in every community of literary magazines, art exhibits, insistence by Negroes on entry into every cultural, professional and community organization with Negro caucuses consciously organized in all of them.

8) as a political background, Negroes should make demands on the society that are total, that is which, however, impractical they seem, meet all Negro grievances (equalizing cash indemnities, preferential treatment, and so on) and these demands should be a part of the leadership training programs.

9) family allowances, with particular allowances made for school children, with stipends through college, with a liberal continuing qualification.

10) qualification for the armed forces should be liberalized for Negroes and the training programs should be enlarged to include liberal arts education to make up for young people the inadequacies of their public school training.

11) as a basic principle Negroes should reject any training for servility, and insist that the allowances given under the various manpower training programs be offered equally for training that does not lead directly to jobs, but which does provide basic education, thus pay equivalent apprentice allowances under the Manpower Retraining programs for Negro youth to go to high school and college.

12) relief payments should meet cultural needs as we ll as physical needs and should be considered as equalization payments rather than as welfare, with the programs themselves incorporating the goal of cultural equalization rather than subsistence.

Lewis Carliner

Presented at Institute For Policy Studies.